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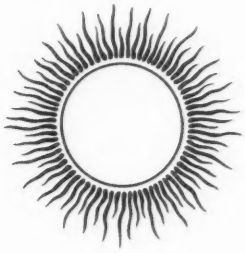
HERACLITEAN FIRE

Sketches from a Life before Nature

ERWIN CHARGAFF



Dr. Chargaff is best known to the scientific community as the author of "Chargaff's rule," or complementarity—the most important piece of evidence leading to the discovery of the double-helical structure of DNA.

An outspoken, insightful, and often hilarious critic of what he terms "our inhuman century," Dr. Chargaff here discusses his early life in Vienna, his introduction to the United States, and his dread of contemporary "big science."

Autobiographies by scientists form a small but select genre, of which the latest and surely one of the best is Erwin Chargaff's Heraclitean Fire. *Its artfully discontinuous form, its passion alternating with detachment, and its sardonic humor put it in a class apart, where the perplexities and the resigned wisdom of the twentieth century man of science are mirrored as never before.*

Jacques Barzun
Columbia University

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